

An Offprint from

Short Stories *for Students*

Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on
Commonly Studied Short Stories





Short Stories for Students

Project Editor

David Galens

Editorial

Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research

Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture

Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions

Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia

Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design

Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing

Stacy Melson

© 1997-2002; © 2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc.

Gale and Design® and Thomson Learning™ are trademarks used herein under license.

For more information, contact

The Gale Group, Inc.
27500 Drake Rd.

Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535

Or you can visit our Internet site at
<http://www.gale.com>

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems—without the written permission of the publisher.

For permission to use material from this product, submit your request via Web at <http://www.gale-edit.com/permissions>, or you may download our Permissions Request form and submit your request by fax or mail to:

Permissions Department

The Gale Group, Inc.
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535
Permissions Hotline:
248-699-8006 or 800-877-4253, ext. 8006
Fax: 248-699-8074 or 800-762-4058

Since this page cannot legibly accommodate all copyright notices, the acknowledgments constitute an extension of the copyright notice.

While every effort has been made to secure permission to reprint material and to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, The Gale Group, Inc. does not guarantee the accuracy of the data contained herein. The Gale Group, Inc. accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

ISSN 1092-7735

Printed in the United States of America

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of *Short Stories for Students (SSfS)* is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying short stories by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's "For Students" Literature line, *SSfS* is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific short fiction. While each volume contains entries on "classic" stories frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary stories, including works by multicultural, international, and women writers.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the story and the story's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in the work; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the narrative as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the story; analysis of important themes in the story; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the work.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the story itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work.

This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the story was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the story or author. A unique feature of *SSfS* is a specially commissioned critical essay on each story, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each story, information on media adaptations is provided (if available), as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the work.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of *SSfS* were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed include: literature anthologies, *Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges*; *Teaching the Short Story: A Guide to Using Stories from around the World*, by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); and "A Study of High School Literature Anthologies," conducted by Arthur Applebee at the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of “classic” stories (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary stories for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. Works not selected for the present volume were noted as possibilities for future volumes. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in *SSfS* focuses on one story. Each entry heading lists the title of the story, the author’s name, and the date of the story’s publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the story which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author’s life, and focuses on events and times in the author’s life that may have inspired the story in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a description of the events in the story. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of the characters who appear in the story. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character’s role in the story, as well as discussion of the character’s actions, relationships, and possible motivation.

Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in “The Eatonville Anthology”—the character is listed as “The Narrator” and alphabetized as “Narrator.” If a character’s first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name.

- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the story. Each theme discussed appears in a sepa-

rate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.

- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the story, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** this section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate *in which the author lived and the work was created*. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the story is historical in nature, information regarding the time in which the story is set is also included. Long sections are broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the author and the story, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section may include a history of how the story was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent works, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by *SSfS* which specifically deals with the story and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).
- **Sources:** an alphabetical list of critical material used in compiling the entry, with bibliographical information.
- **Further Reading:** an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. It includes bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- **Media Adaptations:** if available, a list of film and television adaptations of the story, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.

- **Topics for Further Study:** a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the story. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- **Compare and Contrast:** an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century or early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the story was written, the time or place the story was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- **What Do I Read Next?:** a list of works that might complement the featured story or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes “Why Study Literature At All?,” a foreword by Thomas E. Barden, Professor of English and Director of Graduate English Studies at the University of Toledo. This essay provides a number of very fundamental reasons for studying literature and, therefore, reasons why a book such as *SSfS*, designed to facilitate the study of literature, is useful.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the *SSfS* series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the *SSfS* series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in **boldface**.

Each entry may include illustrations, including photo of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of *SSfS* may use the following general forms to document their source. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, thus, the following examples may be adapted as needed.

When citing text from *SSfS* that is not attributed to a particular author (for example, the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format may be used:

“The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.”
Short Stories for Students. Ed. Kathleen Wilson. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 1997. 19–20.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from *SSfS* (usually the first essay under the Criticism subhead), the following format may be used:

Korb, Rena. Critical essay on “Children of the Sea.”
Short Stories for Students. Ed. Kathleen Wilson. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 1997. 42.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of *Short Stories for Students*, the following form may be used:

Schmidt, Paul. “The Deadpan on Simon Wheeler.”
Southwest Review Vol. XLI, No. 3 (Summer, 1956), 270–77; excerpted and reprinted in *Short Stories for Students*, Vol. 1, ed. Kathleen Wilson. (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 29–31.

When quoting material from a book that is reprinted in a volume of *SSfS*, the following form may be used:

Bell-Villada, Gene H. “The Master of Short Forms,”
in *Garcia Marquez: The Man and His Work*. University of North Carolina Press, 1990 pp. 119–300; excerpted and reprinted in *Short Stories for Students*, Vol. 1, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 89–90.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of *Short Stories for Students* welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest short stories to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via E-mail at: **ForStudentsEditors@gale.com**. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, *Short Stories for Students*
The Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331–3535

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the excerpted criticism included in this volume and the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reproduction rights. We are also grateful to the staffs of the Detroit Public Library, the Library of Congress, the University of Detroit Mercy Library, Wayne State University Purdy/Kresge Library Complex, and the University of Michigan Libraries for making their resources available to us. Following is a list of the copyright holders who have granted us permission to reproduce material in this volume of *SSFS*. Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.

COPYRIGHTED EXCERPTS IN *SSFS*, VOLUME 1, WERE REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS:

American Literature, v. XXVIII, November, 1956. Copyright © 1956 Duke University Press, Durham, NC. Reproduced with permission.—*The Antioch Review*, v. XXV, Fall, 1965. Copyright © 1965 by The Antioch Review Inc. Reproduced by permission of the Editors.—*Belles Lettres: A Review of Books by Women*, v. 10, Summer, 1995. Reproduced by permission.—*The Boston Globe*, July 19, 1995. © 1995 Globe Newspaper Co. Reproduced courtesy of *The Boston Globe*.—*CLA Journal*, v. XX, September, 1976; v. XXXVII, June, 1994. Copyright 1976, 1994 by The College Lan-

guage Association. Both used by permission of The College Language Association.—*College English*, v. 23, May, 1962 for "Point of View in 'The Secret Sharer'" by Charles G. Hoffmann. Copyright © 1967 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—*Conradiana*, v. XVIII, 1986 for "Shared Secret or Secret Sharing in Joseph Conrad's 'The Secret Sharer'" by Mary Ann Dazey. Reproduced with permission of Texas Tech University Press and the author.—*Doris Lessing Newsletter*, v. 9, Spring, 1985. © 1985 by Brooklyn College, The City University of New York. Reproduced by permission.—*English Journal*, v. 56, December, 1967 for "The Architecture of Walter Mitty's Secret Life" by Carl Sundell. Copyright © 1967 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—*Essays in Literature*, v. XV, Fall, 1988. Copyright 1988 by Western Illinois University. Reproduced by permission.—*The Explicator*, v. XII, March, 1954; v. 32, May, 1974; v. 42, Summer, 1984; v. 48, Summer, 1990. Copyright 1954, 1974, 1984, 1990 by Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. All reproduced with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, published by Heldref Publications, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1802.—*The Georgia Review*, v. XXVIII, Summer, 1974. Copyright, 1974, by the University of Georgia. Reproduced by permission.—*The Hemingway Review*, v. II, Spring,

1983; v. XI, Fall, 1991. Copyright 1983, 1991 by The Ernest Hemingway Foundation. Both reproduced by permission of the publisher.—*James Joyce Quarterly*, v. 7, Summer, 1970. Copyright, 1970, The University of Tulsa. Reproduced by permission.—*Journal of American Culture*, v. 15, Summer, 1992. Copyright © 1992 by Ray B. Browne. Reproduced by permission.—*The Journal of General Education*, v. 28, Spring, 1976. Copyright 1976 by The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA. Reproduced by permission.—*The Journal of Narrative Technique*, v. 5, January, 1975 for “‘Don’t You Know Who I Am’: The Grotesque in Oates’s ‘Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?’ ” Copyright © 1975 by *The Journal of Narrative Technique*. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—*Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, v. 26, 1979. Copyright © 1979 Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. Reproduced with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, published by Heldref Publications, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1802.—*Literature/Film Quarterly*, v. 10, 1982. Reproduced by permission.—*Mark Twain Journal*, v. XX, Winter, 1979-80. Reproduced by permission.—*MELUS*, v. 12, Fall, 1985. Copyright, MELUS, The Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States, 1985. Reproduced by permission.—*The Nathaniel Hawthorne Journal*, 1973 for “‘The Woe That Is Madness: Goodman Brown and the Face of the Fire’ ” by Robert E. Morsberger. Copyright © 1973 by Bruccoli Clark Publishers, Inc. Reproduced by permission of the author.—*New York Folklore Quarterly*, v. XXIV, December, 1968. Copyright 1968 by the New York Folklore Society. Reproduced by permission.—*Renascence*, v. XXI, Autumn, 1968. © copyright 1968, Marquette University Press. Reproduced by permission.—*The Southern Literary Journal*, v. 25, Spring, 1994. Copyright 1994 by the Department of English, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Reproduced by permission.—*Southwest Review*, v. XLI, Summer, 1956. © 1956 Southern Methodist University. Reproduced by permission.—*Studies in Short Fiction*, v. 18, Summer, 1981; v. 22, Spring, 1985; v. 26, Fall, 1989. Copyright 1981, 1985, 1989 by Newberry College. All reproduced by permission.—*The USF Language Quarterly*, v. XV, Spring-Summer, 1977. Reproduced by permission

COPYRIGHTED EXCERPTS IN SSFS, VOLUME 1, WERE REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

Bell-Villada, Gene H. From *Garcia Marquez: The Man and His Work*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1990. © 1990 The University of North Carolina Press. All rights reserved. Used by permission of the publisher.—Bus, Heiner. From “‘The Establishment of Community in Zora Neale Hurston’s ‘The Eatonville Anthology’ (1926) and Roland Hinojosa’s ‘Estampas del valle’ (1973),” in *European Perspective on Hispanic Literature of the United States*. Edited by Genvieve Fabre. Arte Publico Press, 1988. Copyright © 1988 by Arte Publico Press. Reproduced by permission.—Jackson, Shirley. From “‘Biography of a Story,” in *Come Along with Me*. Edited by Stanley Edgar Hyman. Viking Press, 1968. Copyright 1948, 1952, © 1960 by Shirley Jackson. Reproduced by permission of the Literary Estate of Shirley Jackson. In North America and the Philippines by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc.—Wagner-Martin, Linda. From “‘Gilman’s ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’: A Centenary,” in *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work*. Edited by Sheryl L. Meyering. UMI Research Press, 1989. Copyright © 1989 Sheryl L. Meyering. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the author.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS APPEARING IN SSFS, VOLUME 1, WERE RECEIVED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

Bingo game, photograph. Corbis-Bettmann. Reproduced by permission. Bradbury, Ray, photograph. Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission. Clemens, Samuel, photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission. Conrad, Joseph, photograph. Archive Photos. Reproduced by permission. Danticat, Edwidge, photograph. Copyright © 1994 Nancy Crampton. Reproduced by permission. Ellison, Ralph, photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission. Marquez, Gabriel Garcia, photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission. Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, portrait. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College. Reproduced by permission. *The Scarlet Letter*, movie still. M-G-M. Courtesy of the Kobal Collection. Reproduced by permission. Haitian refugees, photograph. AP/Wide World Inc. Reproduced by permission. Hawthorne, Nathaniel, photograph. The Library of Congress. Hemingway, Ernest, photograph by A. E. Hotchner. Reproduced by permission. Hemingway, Ernest, photograph. Archive Photos. Reproduced by permission. Hurston,

Zora Neale, photograph by Carl Van Vechten. The Library of Congress. Jackson, Shirley, photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission. Joyce, James, photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission. *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, photograph. Corbis-Bettmann. Reproduced by permission. *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, movie still. Archive Photos. Reproduced by permission. Lessing, Doris, photograph. © Jerry Bauer. Reproduced by permission.

The Most Dangerous Game In the World, photograph. Springer/Corbis-Bettmann Film Archive. Reproduced by permission. Olsen, Tillie, photograph by Miriam Berkley. Photo © Miriam Berkley. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission. Porter, Katherine Anne, photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission. *Smooth Talk*, movie still. Archive Photos. Reproduced by permission. Thurber, James, photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.

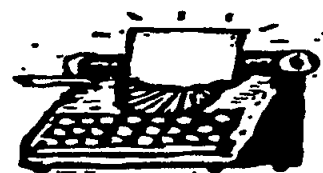
Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?

Joyce Carol Oates

1966

Joyce Carol Oates was inspired to write "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" after reading an account in *Life* magazine of a charismatic but insecure young man who had enticed and then killed several girls in Tucson, Arizona, during the early 1960s. Transformed into fiction, this story was first published by the literary journal *Epoch* in 1966 and was included in Oates's 1970 short story collection *The Wheel of Love*. Critical acclaim was so swift and certain that as early as 1972, critic Walter Sullivan noted that it was "one of her most widely reprinted stories and justly so." Along with the story's frequent appearance in textbooks and anthologies, Oates herself republished it in 1974 as the title story for *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?: Stories of Young America*. This collection's subtitle points to Oates's ongoing interest in adolescence, especially the psychological and social turmoil that arises during this difficult period. Her preoccupation with these topics, along with her keen sense of the special pressures facing teenagers in contemporary society, is evident in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

This story is seen by many as one of Oates's best and in the words of scholar G. F. Waller, it is "one of the masterpieces of the genre." Oates's realism often garners such praise; critics and readers alike have commended the presentation of the story's central character, Connie, as a typical teenager who may be disliked, pitied, or even identified with. A similar believability is instilled in Arnold Friend's



manipulative stream of conversation and its psychological effects on a vulnerable teenager. Critics also praise the story for its evocative language, its use of symbols, and an ambiguous conclusion which allows for several interpretations of the story's meaning. In 1988, a film version of the story was released entitled *Smooth Talk*.

Author Biography

Joyce Carol Oates was born in 1938. As a child growing up in Lockport, New York, her preparation for her future career began early. Before she could even write, she used pictures to convey stories. At the age of fifteen she submitted her first novel to a publisher, but the book was rejected for being "too dark" since it dealt with a drug addict who is reformed by caring for a black stallion. Such "dark" themes are common to Oates's work, including the frequently anthologized story, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

Oates completed her college education at Syracuse University in 1960 and earned a master's degree in English at the University of Wisconsin a year later. Newly married, Oates and her husband, Ray Smith, moved to Texas so he could continue his own schooling. Although by this time Oates had published many stories, she did not think of herself as a professional writer until, by chance, she came across favorable mention of one of her stories in a prestigious anthology, *Best American Short Stories*. This marked a turning point in her life. Her first published collection of short stories quickly followed in 1963, and her first novel, *With Shuddering Fall*, was published in 1964. Since then, Oates's reputation for writing outstanding novels, stories, poetry, plays, and essays has been matched by her reputation for prolificacy—she publishes a new title at least once a year, and often more than that.

In 1962 Oates moved to Detroit where she lived for the next sixteen years while teaching at area universities. The influence of Detroit on Oates' writing led to one of her earliest and greatest successes. Her novel *them*, in which she explores the conditions that led to the 1967 race riots through the experiences of one fictional family, won the National Book Award in 1970. In this phase of her career, Oates turned most often in her writing to everyday characters, which she often placed in situations that were both psychologically and socially terrifying. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

first published in 1966 before it was included in Oates' 1970 collection *The Wheel of Love*, dates from this period.

A professor of English at Princeton University since 1978 and co-founder of the literary journal *The Ontario Review*, Oates continues her prolific literary output while teaching courses in writing. In the years since "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?," her choice of subject matter has broadened to include mystery novels (several written under the pseudonym of Rosamond Smith) and historical fiction, which critics have commended along with the gripping realistic narratives for which she is best known.

Plot Summary

Connie is a fifteen-year-old teenager growing up in suburbia in the 1960s. She is preoccupied with typical teenage concerns: her looks and popular music. She argues with her mother, makes fun of her older, plainer sister, and hangs out with her friends in restaurants, movie theaters, and shopping malls. During these summertime social ventures, she and her friends try to attract the attention of the older high-school boys. One evening, while on a date, Connie notices a boy with black hair and a gold "jalopy"—a beat-up sports car—staring at her.

One Sunday while her parents and sister attend a family barbecue, Connie, contemptuous of family gatherings, elects to stay home and wash her hair. As she sits in the backyard letting her hair dry, she thinks about the boy she had been with the night before. Later, while listening to the radio inside the house, she hears a car coming up the driveway. Thinking that her family would not be home so soon, she goes to the window and sees that it is not her parents' car, but a gold jalopy that she does not remember having seen before. Her heart pounds, her fingers straighten her hair, and when the horn taps several times, she goes to the side door to meet the visitor.

There are two men in the car, and Connie watches them from the screen door. She now recognizes the driver as the one who had stared at her at the restaurant. He asks "I ain't late, am I?" as if they had a date. Connie makes small talk with him while deciding whether or not she likes him. He

introduces himself as Arnold Friend, the other boy as Ellie, and he shows off his car, which is painted with words, pictures, and numbers. He invites her to go for a ride.

Arnold Friend seems to know many things about Connie: her name, who her friends are, and the fact that her family is gone for the afternoon. Connie notices that an expression painted on his car—"man the flying saucers"—is outdated; it was popular the year before. She also realizes that, although he wears the right clothes and talks like all the kids, he seems older and out of place. His hair appears to be a wig, he wears lifts in his boots, and his face looks as if it is caked with makeup. Though he claims to be eighteen, Connie suspects that he is at least thirty. When Arnold's friend Ellie turns around, Connie sees he looks like a forty-year-old baby. Connie realizes something is wrong and tells them to go away.

Arnold refuses to leave without her. Connie threatens that her father will return, but Arnold knows that he will be at the barbecue all afternoon—he even knows where it is and what Connie's sister is wearing. His conversation becomes more intimate. He calls her "lover" and talks about having sex with her and holding her so tightly she will not be able to get away. Connie becomes frightened and backs away from the door. She threatens to call the police, but Arnold, who has pledged not to come in the house, threatens to come in after her if she touches the phone. When she says that her father is coming back to get her, Arnold knows she is lying. Ellie asks if he should pull out the phone lines.

Arnold tells Ellie to shut up and urges Connie to come outside. He threatens to harm her whole family if she does not cooperate. When Ellie again asks him about the phone, Arnold becomes irritated and lists off a series of slang phrases from different decades, trying to find the one that is current. He continues to threaten Connie's family and implies that he has killed one of the neighbors. Connie asks what he is going to do with her and he says he has a few things in mind, but that she will learn to like him. In fear, Connie stumbles her way to the phone but is unable to dial; she simply screams into the receiver. When she stops, Arnold is standing by the door. Her fear is replaced by emptiness, and she understands that she will leave the house and never return. She approaches the screen door and watches herself opening it, feeling as if she no longer inhabits her own body. She walks out into the sunlight



Joyce Carol Oates

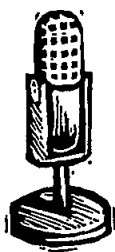
where Arnold waits, assuming a mocking gesture of welcome.

Characters

Connie

Fifteen-year-old Connie exhibits the confusing, often superficial behavior typical of a teenage girl facing the difficult transition from girlhood to womanhood. She is rebellious, vain, self-centered, and deceitful. She is caught between her roles as a daughter, friend, sister, and object of sexual desire, uncertain of which one represents the real her: "Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere that was not home." She is deeply romantic, as shown by her awareness of popular song lyrics, but she is interested more in the concept of having a boyfriend than the boyfriend himself. She sees the boys who exhibit interest in her primarily as conquests who "dissolved into a single face that was not even a face but an idea." All of these traits make her vulnerable to Arnold Friend's manipulation. At first she is flattered by his attentions, unable to realize that he is in fact a menacing

Media Adaptations



- "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" was adapted as a film, *Smooth Talk*, directed by Joyce Chopra and starring Laura Dern, Treat Williams, and Mary Kay Place. It was originally produced in 1985 for the "American Playhouse Series" on the Public Broadcasting System and is available from Live Home Video and Vestron Video.

force. Connie's superficiality leads her into a situation in which she becomes powerless over the forces to which she is naively attracted.

A more complex reading of Connie's character, one that includes a glimmer of hope for reaching beyond her own self-centeredness, can be found in an article by Joyce Carol Oates. In speaking of the ending to the story, Oates points out that Connie is "capable of an unexpected gesture of heroism" when she believes her compliance with Arnold will prevent him from harming her family.

Connie's Mother

Connie's mother frequently nags her youngest daughter and often makes comparisons between her and June, her well-behaved oldest daughter. However, she also feels a closeness with Connie that makes them "sometimes, over coffee . . . almost friends." Connie's mother "had been pretty once too," and therefore may prefer Connie (or so her daughter believes) to the more matronly looking June. The mother is uneasy with her daughter's behavior, most likely because she realizes that Connie's actions and manner of dress are more promiscuous than that befitting a fifteen-year-old girl. But when the mother tries to discipline her daughter, Connie believes the conflict stems from her mother's resentment of her youth and beauty. Nevertheless, the mother tries her best to trust her daughter, and that trust is interpreted by Connie as "simplicity" because she thinks her mother believes her lies about "where she's going" and

"where she's been." Nevertheless, the mother has managed to form a deep connection with her daughter. Near the end of the story, Connie "[cries] for her mother" and thinks "I'm not going to see my mother again," demonstrating that Connie's rejection of her mother is a product of teenage defiance.

Arnold Friend

Initially portrayed as "a boy with shaggy black hair, in a convertible jalopy painted gold" who notices Connie at the drive-in restaurant, Arnold Friend assumes many identities throughout the story. He is the sweet-talking suitor, whose appearance Connie approves of because of his "familiar face." He is also a potential rapist and murderer who uses psychological manipulation to appeal to Connie's vanity and her need to be liked by men. Perhaps the most terrifying thing about Arnold Friend is that he blends elements of romance—"I took a special interest in you, such a pretty girl"—and violence—"We ain't leaving until you come with us"—in order to appeal to a young woman unsure of who she is. Arnold Friend's name is a dark joke, alternately A. Friend, or without too much transformation, A. Fiend. Many critics have suggested that Arnold Friend is the devil in disguise. He has trouble balancing on his small feet—hooves?—and the make-up on his face makes him look younger than he really is. He tells Connie that he's eighteen, although she estimates that he must be at least thirty. He calls an "X" he draws in the air "his sign," and knows that Connie's family is away for the afternoon at a family barbecue and recites their whereabouts in astonishing detail.

June

Connie's responsible older sister, June, is twenty-four years old, works as a secretary at Connie's high school, and lives at home with her parents. Described as "plain and chunky and steady," she conforms where Connie rebels, serving as the standard to which Connie's own behavior is always compared and found wanting. Connie believes she is better than her sister because she is more beautiful.

Ellie Oscar

Arnold's brown-haired, red-faced cohort, Ellie Oscar initially seems to be a silent and harmless hanger-on, content to listen to his transistor radio as Arnold speaks with Connie. Later, he becomes a more ominous figure with a violent potential, as he offers to "pull out the phone" and prevent Connie

from calling for help, then produces a weapon, prompting Arnold's order to "put that away." Connie's changing perception of Ellie mirrors her changing perspective on Arnold. Furthermore, Ellie's status as loyal follower and accomplice demonstrates Arnold's power to fascinate.

Themes

The tale of an insecure, romantic teenage girl drawn into a situation of foreboding violence, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" presents several themes that arise from the interaction of sharply drawn characters engaged in psychological manipulation.

Appearances and Reality

Connie prides herself as a skilled flirt who has never been in a situation she could not handle. She feels confident when Arnold Friend arrives at her door while she is alone in the house: "Who the hell do you think you are?" she asks. Mistaking him for the type of boy she frequently attracts, she thinks she recognizes him from the sound of his car's horn, his clothing and physical appearance, and the line of banter with which he attempts to lure her into his car. Both Arnold and Connie contribute to these erroneous first impressions. Arnold assumes a role as a teenage Romeo although he is much older, and Connie accepts his facade because of her fondness for the "trashy daydreams" her mother accuses her of subscribing to.

Because the story is told from Connie's perspective (although she is not the narrator), readers see the gradual dismantling of these first impressions through her eyes. She realizes that Arnold's hair may be a wig, that his tan is the result of makeup, and that his boots "must have been stuffed with something so that he would seem taller." Though the veracity of these observations is never proven, they reveal Connie's realization that Arnold is not what he seems. His romantic words are not original but taken from popular songs, and his manner is that of "a hero in a movie." Nothing about Arnold Friend is genuine, except his violent intentions and his skills of psychological and physical intimidation. By the story's end, Connie realizes that she is not the confident flirt she thought, but a powerless pawn in the hands of a dangerous individual.

Topics for Further Study



- Read the 1966 *Life* magazine article, "The Pied Piper of Tucson," which inspired Oates's story, and compare the fictional and journalistic interpretations of the same event. How does each writer try to shape the reader's opinion through presentation of individuals, setting, and events?
- What role does popular music of the 1960s play in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Does music continue to influence young people today in a similar manner?
- Research the crime of acquaintance or date rape, focusing on its presentation in the media, the stories of its victims, and its status in the American legal system. In the 1960s, when the story was written, who would most likely have been blamed for Connie's fate? Who would be blamed if the same thing happened today?

Identity and the Search for Self

Connie is vulnerable to Arnold Friend's manipulations because she has no clear identity of her own. As a teenager, she is neither a child nor a woman. Connie attempts to establish her identity by testing the boundaries her parents set for her, assuming a different persona at home than she does with her friends, and seeking validation of her attractiveness from the boys at the drive-in restaurant. Connie identifies her worth as a person with her physical beauty, a factor that causes her to disparage her sister, fight with her mother, and engage in the "habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors or checking other people's faces to make sure her own was all right."

Connie's behavior is typical among teenagers searching for identity. Though Connie's encounter with Arnold Friend is extreme, Oates devised the situation to illustrate how an unstable identity can make an adolescent—especially a girl—susceptible to exploitation by someone who knows how to feed a vain, unsteady ego for his own interests and desires. Connie is practiced in acting out the stereo-

type of being a pretty girl. By the time Arnold asks her, "What else is there for a girl like you but to be sweet and pretty and give in?" she feels she can do nothing but comply. Trusting in her incomplete identity to the end, she is led to ruin.

Victim and Victimization

Connie's unstable identity provides her with a mentality that makes her a perfect victim for Arnold's sexual, perhaps even murderous, designs. In the presence of a true villain, Connie's propensity for flirtation becomes a fatal character trait. Unfamiliar with the logic and reasoning that comes from having a strong, centered identity, she becomes prone to Arnold's psychological manipulation, and thus a willing victim.

Connie believes that because Arnold looks and acts like other boys she has known—those she believes she has handled so adeptly in the past—she has nothing to fear from him. She is drawn in by his flattery, intrigued by his claims that he has "found out all about" her. By the time his violent intentions become apparent, Arnold has gained a psychological hold over Connie that he maintains with a blend of threats, romantic language, and a hypnotic tone that Connie perceives as an "incantation." He strips her of the little selfhood she possesses by telling her who she is: a nice girl who is sweet and pretty and does what he says. By the time she surrenders to Arnold, he has so undermined her sense of personal will that she perceives that her body is no longer her own.

Style

Point of View

The first line of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"—"Her name was Connie"—signals that it is being told by a third-person narrator. This narrative voice stays closely aligned to Connie's point of view. The reader learns what her thoughts are, but the narrator provides no additional information or judgment of the situation. For instance, Connie's harsh appraisals of her sister and mother are discussed: "now [her mother's] looks were gone and that was why she was always after Connie," but it is clear that this assessment is Connie's and not the narrator's.

Observing the story's events through a narrator who presents things as Connie sees them allows the reader to identify with her terror as she is trans-

formed from a flirt into a victim. Arnold Friend is presented only as he appears to Connie; the reader learns nothing of his unspoken thoughts. This narrative "detachment" makes him less human and more ominous than if the narrator provided details that would allow the reader to identify with him. Maintaining the third-person narrative voice instead of telling the story in Connie's own words, however, allows Oates to use descriptive language that Connie would presumably not. It is through this language that much of the mood, imagery, and symbolism of the story emerges.

Setting

References to popular music and slang date the events in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been" to the same period when Oates wrote the story in the mid-1960s. Oates sketches in few details of the town, which is meant to be a typical suburban landscape that includes familiar sights such as a shopping plaza and drive-in restaurant. This setting is further described in the reference to the newness and style of the three-year-old "asbestos 'ranch house'" Connie lives in. Such an innocuous setting is incongruous with the violence suggested in the story, and the contrast serves to heighten the reader's uneasiness. The lack of specific description of the setting serves to universalize the story's themes, which suggest that Connie's lack of identity is a legacy of modern suburban culture. Though the actual location of the story is irrelevant, the reference to the radio show Connie listens to, the "XYZ Sunday Jamboree," may be a reference to radio station WXYZ in Detroit, Michigan, the area in which Oates lived at the time the story was written.

Structure

The structure of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" follows a familiar pattern. The first few pages of exposition acquaint the reader with Connie and her family, providing details about her character and lifestyle. The rising action begins when Arnold Friend pulls into the driveway and instigates a conversation with Connie. Her character, which has been carefully outlined, begins to interact with another force. This force presents a conflict for Connie: should she succumb to Arnold, or try to save herself? At the climax of the story, Connie's will is overtaken by Arnold and she acquiesces to his evil desires.

The most unusual aspect of the story's structure, perhaps, is its lack of resolution. The action abruptly ends as Connie walks towards Arnold. The



Laura Dern and Treat Williams in Smooth Talk, the 1985 film version of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

fact that the reader does not find out Connie's fate further heightens the story's mood of violence, in which horror is suggested, but never shown. The only hint of the action's resolution is in the foreshadowing statements made by Arnold when he says he wants to "come inside you where it's all secret" and show Connie "what love is like," statements that hint at rape. Similarly, Connie laments that "I'm not going to see my mother again" or "sleep in my bed again," comments that suggest her murder. However, the lack of a stated resolution has been a point of major discussion in critical essays on the story, with some proposing that Connie is killed and others proposing that she is not. Some critics look outside the story, to Oates's factual source in the Arizona murderer she had read about in *Life* magazine, to find evidence of Connie's certain death. An additional interpretation of the story's resolution is provided by critic Larry Rubin, who interprets the entire encounter with Arnold as Connie's dream. By this reasoning, the story's unstated resolution involves Connie's awakening from one of her "trashy daydreams." The ambiguity of the resolution heightens the narrative's lingering mood of horror by prolonging suspense beyond its ending.

Symbolism and Imagery

Many critics have interpreted Arnold Friend as a symbol of some larger idea or force, such as the devil, death, or sexuality. Connie, also, has been said to represent many things: Eve, troubled youth, or spiritually unenlightened humanity. Such interpretations can be validated by Oates's initial title for the story, "Death and the Maiden," which she explains was chosen to suggest "an allegory of the fatal attractions of death (or the devil)" for a young woman who is "seduced by her own vanity." Oates also points out, though, that as she revised the story her interest shifted toward a more realistic, rather than allegorical, treatment of her character and situation.

Several images are used to give readers insight into Connie's perspective in the story. These images frequently relate to popular music, which serves as a background throughout the entire story and takes on a near-sacred religious function for Connie since "none of them bothered with church." "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been" is subtitled "For Bob Dylan," and at least one critic has noticed the similarity between Arnold's car and the "magic swirling ship" that Dylan wrote about in his 1960s

song "Mr. Tambourine Man." Connie believes that life and love will be "the way it was in movies and promised in songs." This belief in the simplistic thoughts of popular music makes her unable to discern Arnold Friend's true nature until it is too late to escape. Arnold, too, relies on song lyrics to seduce Connie. In a "half-sung sigh" he calls her "My sweet little blue-eyed girl," a possible reference to the Van Morrison song "Brown-Eyed Girl." Connie, in fact, has brown eyes, and the misstatement is further evidence that Arnold is not what he seems.

Historical Context

The Women's Movement

Interest in women's equal rights was a subject of great controversy during the early years of Oates's career leading up to "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" The 1960s and early 1970s marked the escalation of the women's movement. Economic shifts meant that more women worked outside the home, and Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment, resulting in many political battles during the long ratification process, which it ultimately failed. Many men and women reconsidered the traditional balance of power in their relationships, families, and the workplace. The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1963, which made it illegal to pay men and women different wages for the same work. In 1973 the Supreme Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade* that a woman's right to privacy allowed for legal abortion in the first trimester of a pregnancy.

Although relations between the sexes had been a perennial topic in literature before this period, the 1960s saw a rise in the number of works that attempted to illustrate the oppression of women by a male-dominated society. Oates is one among a number of writers who has devoted attention to the psychological and cultural processes that promote conflicts, even violence, between men and women. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" has often been viewed by critics as a story with feminist themes, as Oates explores the pressures on young women to equate their self-worth with physical beauty. Furthermore, she demonstrates how men can emotionally exploit women and present a real, physical danger to them by preying upon their misguided notions of self-worth.

A Transforming American Society

Other dramatic changes in American culture provide an additional backdrop to Oates's story. Oates has frequently been praised for her nearly photographic portrayals of the social milieu in which each piece of her fiction is set. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" is no different; in its few pages readers can grasp many factors at work in America during the late 1960s, particularly those affecting young people. These include the haphazard growth of American suburbs, and the resulting loss of community cohesiveness; changes in family bonds, evident in Connie's lenient mother and a father who "didn't bother talking much" to his family; sexual permissiveness; and a youth subculture that obtained its identity through music and other popular art forms.

The Youth Subculture

Young Americans increasingly suspected that the American dream their parents had embraced might be either unattainable and/or undesirable. The post-World War II baby boom generation had altered the face of the country, and they began to raise their voices on both political and social issues. Opinion over the United States's involvement in the Vietnam War heightened the conflict between generations, and the anti-war sentiment among young people reached its peak in the late 1960s. In Chicago, hundreds of anti-war demonstrators protested at the 1968 Democratic national convention; many were beaten by police. Over 250,000 gathered for a November, 1969, march on the nation's capital to declare their opposition to the war. Tension mounted to such an extent that many college campuses closed down early in the spring of 1970 to prevent further unrest after four students were shot and killed by members of the National Guard during an anti-war rally at Ohio's Kent State University.

This mood of protest and disillusionment, along with the energy and idealism that often inspired it, filtered into the era's music. Many songs glamorized drugs and sex. Multi-act music festivals such as Woodstock provided an opportunity for young people to gather *en masse* and espouse peace and love through "turning on, tuning in, and dropping out." Critics who have attempted to explain Oates's allusions to popular music in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" do not always agree on the interpretation of her references. However, many observe that the music listened to by the story's characters bears much in common with the style popular just before Oates wrote the story in

Compare & Contrast

- **1970:** The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 87 percent of American homes are headed by married couples.

1990s: With an ascending divorce rate, an increase in out-of-wedlock births, and rising average age for marriage, the number of two-parent families drops to 55.3 percent by 1990.

- **1970:** 37,990 rapes are reported in the United States during the year.

1990s: 109,060 reports of rape are recorded during 1992. This number, almost three times the 1970 figure, is only partly offset by a 28 percent rise in the country's population during the same period.

- **1970:** 89.3 percent of children born in the United States during 1970 are born to married parents. Having children outside marriage carries a social stigma for the mother. Some critics suspect that when Connie's mother asks her daughter, "What's this about the Pettinger girl?," she is alluding to a rumor that a schoolmate of Connie's may be pregnant.

1990s: The percentage of children born into households with two parents married to each other drops to 70 percent, according to 1991 figures.

- **1970:** 28 is the median age of United States citizens, a drop from the 1950 figure of 30, as a result of the post-World War II baby boom.

1990s: As of 1990, the median age in the United States reaches 33, as birth rates decline and people live longer due to advances in health care. This median age is projected to reach 39 by the year 2010.

- **1970:** Based on records of homicides during 1970, 1900 white females in every 100,000 are victims of murder, with a slightly lower figure for black females.

1990s: As of 1991, 3200 females in every 100,000 were victims of murder. Among all gender and racial groups, murders among black females have risen the most dramatically since 1970 (from 1400 to 2400 in every 100,000).

1966. Expectations of innocent romance are partly what blinds Connie to Arnold's intentions, and Arnold speaks in phrases reminiscent of popular romantic songs. For these reasons, critics often argue that Oates endorses the shift from music that ignores reality to music that embraces it. This endorsement is signaled in her dedication of the story to Bob Dylan, who for many personified the mood of political consciousness in music.

Critical Overview

Oates's novel about urban life and murder, *them*, had won the 1970 National Book Award, so it was no surprise that her next collection of short stories,

The Wheel of Love, which appeared later that year, received much attention. The book was widely reviewed, and "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" was often identified as one of its greatest successes. Some critics were disturbed by the violence that marked the entire collection—a common criticism leveled against many of Oates's works—and by the extreme situations and emotions experienced by a central character in nearly every story. "Joyce Carol Oates," Robert Emmet Long wrote in *Saturday Review*, "is not really interested in people, only in mental states." Others recognized that disturbing readers was precisely Oates's aim. A reviewer for the *Virginia Quarterly Review* wrote that Oates had accomplished a goal "to record and communicate what do seem to be dominant tenors of life today," though shocking they might be.

Though such reviews point to the common threads of subject, theme, and characterization that relate "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" to other stories in the collection, it is the story's convergence of these qualities that led some critics to single it out for special note. Richard Gilman, writing in the *New York Times Book Review* praised the story as one that "create[s] a verbal excitement, a sense of language used not for the expression of previously attained insights or perceptions but for new imaginative reality." Echoing this sentiment, Walter Sullivan commended the story for its "imagery of life's deceptions and perils" and its ability to evoke terror through realism. The story began appearing in anthologies and textbooks, and Oates herself reprinted the story in her 1974 collection, *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?: Stories of Young America*.

Since then, the story has been frequently scrutinized by scholars, who often attempt to trace its sources; identify its patterns of symbols, images, and allusions; assess its psychological accuracy, and determine its relationship to Oates's work as a whole. In placing Oates's work in a wider literary context, many critics note the author's debt to such "Southern gothic" writers as William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor for her tendency to place believable characters in realistic settings and then subject them to psychological horror. Tom Quirk, in searching for information regarding the factual origins of the story, wrote in *Studies in Short Fiction* of the parallels between Oates's story and a 1966 *Life* magazine article on a Tucson, Arizona, serial murderer. Oates has since confirmed Quirk's theory but asserted that her story is more fiction than fact because "I do recall deliberately not reading the full article because I didn't want to be distracted by too much detail."

Other critics concentrate on defining the symbolism of the story. Oates's allusions to music, and especially the story's dedication to singer Bob Dylan, have attracted much debate as writers attempt to determine Oates's position on the role of popular music in young people's lives and in American culture as a whole. Similarly, biblical references in the story draw critics' attention to the character Arnold Friend, who has often been described as an embodiment of Satan—or even of Christ. Several writers take to heart Arnold Friend's claim that the numbers painted on his car are a "secret code." They most often attempt to crack this code by turning to the Bible to find specific verses that

correspond with the numbers in the story and that seem to apply to the story's situation and themes.

In analyzing the psychological aspects of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?," critics discuss topics related to teenage sexuality, emotional intimidation, and the process of identity formation. They also examine the psychological principles that underlie Connie's relationship with her mother and sister, as well as her rebellion, self-centeredness, insecurity, and sexual experimentation. Whether these critics perceive Connie's experience as an actual event or as a dream, a theory advanced in Larry Rubin's article on the story, they praise Oates's grasp of adolescent psychology. However, critics often differ in their interpretation of the story's ending. For some, Connie has moved from illusion to reality and from adolescence to adulthood when she gains enough insight to see Arnold and the world around her more accurately. Others assert that the story ends in psychological tragedy rather than triumph, because all Connie has learned is to deny her own will and submit to the desires of others.

Finally, as Oates's writing career has progressed, scholars have gained a greater understanding of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" by tracing the relationship between this story and other fiction and nonfiction in her massive body of work. Elements common to much of Oates's work appear in the story, including a skepticism regarding modern American culture, the disintegration of the family, and the illusory nature of the American dream. The story's exploration of male and female relationships, as well as issues of power and violence, have been ongoing interests throughout Oates's career.

Criticism

Rena Korb

Rena Korb has a master's degree in English literature and creative writing and has written for a wide variety of educational publishers. In the following essay, she discusses the presence of evil in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been," stating that Arnold may not be the devil, but he is most certainly allied with him.

Since Joyce Carol Oates's phenomenal appearance on the literary scene in the mid-1960s, she has certainly been one of America's most prolific and

What Do I Read Next?



- William Faulkner's novel, *Sanctuary* (1931), describes horrifying acts and their results in the American South, and probes themes of individual and social evil, disillusionment, and the possibility of achieving justice in an unjust world.
- Daphne Du Maurier's classic gothic novel *Rebecca* (1938) presents a tale of the psychological manipulation of a young bride by her wealthy, troubled husband, Max de Winter. The narrator's insecurity and constant comparisons to her husband's deceased first wife, Rebecca, lead to inaccurate perceptions that give way to surprising truths in the novel's suspenseful conclusion.
- *The Member of the Wedding*, Carson McCullers's 1946 novel of emotional conflicts and the difficult transition into adulthood. Its twelve-year-old female protagonist Frankie Addams wishes to be called F. Jasmine Addams and mistakenly believes she will be accompanying her older brother on his honeymoon. McCullers's deft use of perspective allows readers to understand and sympathize with Frankie, while gaining insights into her situation that she herself is incapable of achieving.
- Flannery O'Connor's collection of short stories
- *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* (1955) makes it clear why Oates's style, subject matter, and themes are often traced to O'Connor's influence. The title story, concerning a family's ominous encounter with a man nicknamed "The Misfit," presents an interesting comparison to "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"
- Susan Brownmiller's groundbreaking 1975 study *Against Our Wills: Men, Women, and Rape* is considered a landmark feminist exploration of the history and psychology of men's power and domination over women.
- Many of the short stories collected in *Heat and Other Stories* by Joyce Carol Oates (1991) touch on the issue of parent and child relationships. Oates's characteristic violence appears in several of the stories. In others, the subject is the emotional extremes inherent in everyday life, as in the mother-daughter trip to the mall portrayed in "Shopping."
- The mind of the serial killer is the focus of Joyce Carol Oates's *Zombie* (1995), told in a series of diary entries kept by the troubled Quentin P—as he attempts to achieve his goal of creating a zombie from one of his victims.

talked-about writers. The author of more than twenty novels and numerous volumes of short stories, poems, plays, and essays, she has drawn the attention of readers and critics alike. Whatever one's opinion of Oates's work may be, it is not possible to ignore her importance as a writer, particularly one who chronicles life in twentieth-century America. Oates has been compared to Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Honore de Balzac, and William Faulkner for her efforts to portray an entire culture of people. It is not surprising that she has been compared to these greats, for Oates also tries to explain some of the mysteries of life, believing that a "writer's job, ideally, is to act as the conscience of his race."

In her essays on D.H. Lawrence and W.B. Yeats, Oates has expressed her interest in "the richness of pain and chaos." Certainly, these elements are apparent in Oates's own writing, and many critics have commented on the bleak nature of her fiction and on the many unpleasant things that happen to her characters. Oates has noted, "People frequently misunderstand serious art because it is often violent and unattractive. I wish the world were a prettier place, but I wouldn't be honest as a writer if I ignored the actual conditions around me." These words apply particularly well to one of her best-known stories, which was based on the case of an Arizona serial killer who preyed on teenage girls. The prize-winning "Where Are You Going, Where

Have You Been?" depicts fifteen-year-old Connie, a "typical" American girl, who is seduced into what we assume will be her rape and murder. Oates mirrors reality in this horrifying portrayal, stinting only on the physical details while deftly exploring Connie's mental terror.

As with much of Oates's fiction, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" uses the technique of psychological realism, funneling the narrative through Connie's consciousness, along with elements of gothic horror, to chilling effect. The story has been subject to differing interpretations by various critics. It has been seen as an inverted fairy tale in which Connie is joined not with Prince Charming but with the Prince of Darkness. These readers have pointed out similarities between Arnold Friend and the devil: his disguise, his supernatural knowledge of the whereabouts of Connie's family, his ability to lure Connie to him against her will, even his very name, which is by no coincidence close to "Arch Fiend." Others see it as a tale of initiation into evil, with the end depicting Connie's acceptance of the depraved American culture. Here Connie inhabits a world of moral impoverishment in which only the false and tawdry are revered. The loss of Connie to Arnold Friend is thus not only the story of one girl's fatal misperception of appearances but also a representation of a loss of innocence.

There are still others who read the story as a feminist allegory which suggests that young women of today, like the generations that have come before them, are headed into sexual bondage. When Connie, the innocent female, walks out of the house to meet what may be her demise, she also represents the spiritual death of women at the moment they give up their independence to the desire of the sexually threatening male.

In addition to reading "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" for its critical interpretation, it can also be enjoyed as a finely crafted story. Oates's control over her narrative is clearly evident as she introduces a protagonist who is familiar enough to earn the reader's empathy, yet still able to surprise. Connie, despite her shallowness, is ultimately likeable. She is suffering, not from a malicious desire to be cruel, but merely from romantic delusions in her search for a "sweet, gentle" love "the way it was in movies and promised in songs." Connie's behavior, when she is in the public eye, testifies to this need: her voice is "high-pitched and nervous"; her face "pleased and expectant" as she

enters the drive-in; while sitting at the counter her shoulders are "rigid with excitement." Whereas Connie is proud of herself for mingling in the world of older teenagers and for fooling her "simple" mother, the reader sees the danger she can encounter in being places where she does not belong. Thus when Arnold, the boy at the drive-in who warns Connie, "Gonna get you, babe," shows up at her house, the terror builds inexorably.

Oates, however, does not point to a simplistic reading of the story as Connie's adolescent dream turned into a nightmare. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" invites multiple readings, and Oates emphasizes throughout the story the importance and duplicity of identity. Nothing in the story is what it seems. Connie's parents, though they appear quite typical, provide no moral guidance. Her mother is not really concerned with Connie's habits and lifestyle but argues with her daughter "over something of little value to either of them." Connie's father is distant and "didn't bother talking much" so, like the father of Connie's friend, he can hardly ask the crucial questions to keep his daughter secure: "Where are you going?" or "Where have you been?" The very place that Connie and her friends revere as a sanctuary, the drive-in restaurant, is described as a "sacred building," which is in reality "fly-infested."

Everything about Connie—her clothing, her walk, her mouth, her laugh—also testifies to these two sides. Connie, however, only values outward appearances; she is always "checking other people's faces to make sure her own was all right." Connie's identity stems from a rigid belief in physical beauty—"she knew she was pretty and that was everything"—and she even thinks her mother prefers her to her plainer older sister solely because of her looks. Since Connie so values appearances, she holds others to these shallow standards and uses what she sees on the surface as her criteria by which to judge them. This superficial view of the world leads her to embrace the drive-in restaurant, "where older kids hung out" and where Arnold Friend marks her with his "X." Then, because at first she "liked the way he was dressed," she does not immediately urge Arnold Friend to leave her drive-way, and she stays talking with him, thus allowing him the time to create a physical space of psychological terror from which she cannot escape.

In contrast to Connie, who has one identity for home and one for "anywhere that was not home," Arnold has the ability to take on whatever role he

feels will woo her away from home. When Arnold arrives at Connie's house, she fixes her hair before approaching the screen door, demonstrating her belief that she will be judged by her looks. Her query "'Who the hell do you think you are?'" does not relate any suspicion but is simply adolescent disinterest, a teenager's way of being "careful to show no interest or pleasure" while leaving herself time to decide if she likes him. Arnold reacts in kind, talking in a "fast, bright monotone." Despite his affected teenage talk, however, his disguise starts to show through. The crazy wig, the lifts in his boots, the face with "plastered make-up" all make it apparent that he is only pretending to be 18 as he begins to speak more frankly about his desires. He thus takes on another role, that of the sexual psychopath who uses his knowledge of a person's weaknesses to bring his victims to him. Arnold makes himself acceptable to Connie through that which she values, superficial appearance, and then uses his own depraved power to keep her with him.

Connie, of course, does not recognize the story's demonic elements when the reader does. These references quickly add up: her utterances of "hell" and "Christ" when Arnold shows up; his supernatural awareness of the details of Connie's life, particularly his ability to "see" the family barbecue; his vampiric inability to enter Connie's house. What is important in these references is not whether Arnold is, in fact, the devil, but that he is so closely linked to the master of evil. The similarities between Arnold and the devil testify to his nature and his capacity to harm Connie. In the face of Connie's increasing terror, Arnold grows stronger. He cuts off her future path of escape when he says, "I'll hold you so tight you won't think you have to try and get away . . . because you'll know you can't," leaving her to see the futility in trying to get away. He shows her how fragile her world is, that the lock on the screen door cannot protect her. Her home is "nothing but a cardboard box I can knock down any time." Arnold shows her the weaknesses in the things she thought represented security and safety.

Arnold is successful because he is able to get past Connie's "at-home" personality—cynical, distant, superior—with his false show of allegiance. Unfortunately for Connie, by the time she ignores the superficial and concerns herself with what lies underneath Arnold's teenage mask, it is too late. When Connie leaves the house for the last time, she has lost her own identity to Arnold's desires. She is filled only with "emptiness." Even her body is no longer hers. As she pushes open the



When Connie leaves the house for the last time, she has lost her own identity to Arnold's desires."

screen door it seems as if "she were back safe somewhere in the other doorway, watching this body and this head of long hair." And as Arnold, who certainly will reveal the more violent natures of his personality after he drives off with his prize, waits for her, he steals away any last vestige of her personality by singing "'My sweet little blue-eyed girl,'" taking no notice that Connie's eyes are actually brown. He has stripped her down, leaving nothing but a shell, a body that he will abuse and then discard. Soon, in addition to losing her identity, Connie will probably lose her life to Arnold.

It is interesting to note that the film version of this story, *Smooth Talk*, does not remain true to Oates's ending. Instead of Connie succumbing to the pernicious allure of Arnold, the film-version Connie rejects Arnold and returns to her family. Oates, while praising the film, "wished, perhaps, for a different ending . . . but I suppose that the ending I wrote was simply not translatable; or palatable." It is more likely that the ending was changed to pacify the viewing public, for in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Oates certainly achieves what critic Alfred Kazin calls a "sweetly brutal sense of what American experience is really like."

Source: Rena Korb, for *Short Stories for Students*, Gale Research, 1997.

Mike Tierce and John Michael Crafton

In the following essay, Tierce and Crafton seek to reinterpret previous critical characterizations of Arnold Friend as a satanic figure and instead draw parallels between him and folksinger Bob Dylan.

The critical reception of Joyce Carol Oates' "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" reveals a consistent pattern for reducing the text to a manageable, univocal reading. Generally, this pattern in-

volves two assumptions: Arnold *must* symbolize Satan and Connie *must* be raped and murdered. No critic has yet questioned Joyce Wegs' assertion that "Arnold is clearly a symbolic Satan." Marie Urbanski argues that Arnold's "feet resemble the devil's cloven hoofs," Joan Winslow calls the story "an encounter with the devil," Tom Quirk maintains the story describes a "demoniac character," and Christina Marsden Gillis refers to "the satanic visitor's incantation." Wegs' assertion that Arnold is "a criminal with plans to rape and probably murder Connie" is also accepted at face value. Gillis assumes that Arnold "leads his victim . . . to a quick and violent sexual assault," and Quirk refers to "the rape and subsequent murder of Connie." Even though Gretchen Schulz and R. J. R. Rockwood correctly claim that the portrait of Arnold "is created in the mind of Connie . . . and that it exists *there only*," they still persist in having Arnold as a demon and Connie as doomed: "But we know that he is still the Wolf, and that he still intends to 'gobble up' this 'little girl' as soon as he gets the chance. Connie is not going to live happily ever after. Indeed, it would seem that she is not going to live at all."

While all of these critics insist on seeing satanic traces in Arnold, they refuse, on the other hand, to see that these traces are only part of a much more complex, more dynamic symbol. There are indeed diabolic shades to Arnold, but just as Blake and Shelley could see in Milton's Satan a positive, attractive symbol of the poet, the rebellious embodiment of creative energy, so we should also be sensitive to Arnold's multifaceted and creative nature. Within the frame of the story, the fiction of Arnold burns in the day as the embodiment of poetic energy. The story is dedicated to Bob Dylan, the troubadour, the artist. Friend is the artist, the actor, the rhetorician, the teacher, all symbolized by Connie's overheated imagination. We should not assume that Arnold is completely evil because she is afraid of him. Her limited perceptions remind us of Blake's questioner in "The Tyger" who begins to perceive the frightening element of the experiential world but also is rather duped into his fear by his own limitations. Like the figure in Blake, Connie is the framer, the story creator—and the diabolic traces in her fiction frighten her not because they are the manifestations of an outside evil but because they are the symbolic extrapolations of her own psyche.

If the adamant insistence that Arnold Friend is Satan is rejected, then who is this intriguing myste-

rious visitor? In *Enter Mysterious Stranger: American Cloistral Fiction* Roy Male asserts that many mysterious intruders throughout American literature "are almost always potential saviors, destroyers, or ambiguous combinations of both, and their initial entrance, however much it may be displaced toward realism, amounts to the entrance of God or the devil on a machine." And if Arnold Friend is *not* satanic, then his arrival could be that of a savior. This possibility moreover is suggested by Connie's whispering "Christ. Christ" when Arnold first arrives in his golden "machine." Not only is "33" part of Arnold's "secret code" of numbers, but his sign, an "X" that seems to hover in the air, is also one of the symbols for Christ. Because music is closely associated with religion—"the music was always in the background, like music at a church service"—it also adds a religious element to Arnold's arrival. The key question then is who is this musical messiah, and the key to the answer is the dedication "For Bob Dylan"—the element of the story so unsatisfactorily accounted for by our predecessors. Not only does the description of Arnold Friend also fit Bob Dylan—a type of rock-and-roll messiah—but three of Dylan's songs (popular when the story was written) are very similar to the story itself.

In the mid-sixties Bob Dylan's followers perceived him to be a messiah. According to his biographer, Dylan was "a rock-and-roll king." It is no wonder then that Arnold speaks with "the voice of the man on the radio," the disc jockey whose name, Bobby King, is a reference to "Bobby" Dylan, the "king" of rock-and-roll. Dylan was more than just a "friend" to his listeners; he was "Christ revisited," "the prophet leading [his followers] into [a new] Consciousness." In fact, "people were making him an idol; . . . thousands of men and women, young and old, felt their lives entwined with his because they saw him as a mystic, a messiah who would lead them to salvation."

That Oates consciously associates Arnold Friend with Bob Dylan is clearly suggested by the similarities of their physical descriptions. Arnold's "shaggy, shabby black hair that looked crazy as a wig," his "long and hawklike nose," his unshavened face, his "big and white" teeth, his lashes, "thick and black as if painted with a black tarlike material" and his size ("only an inch or so taller than Connie" are all characteristic of Bob Dylan. Even Arnold's "fast, bright monotone voice" is suggestive of Dylan, especially since he speaks "in a simple

lilting voice, exactly as if he were reciting the words to a song."

Dylan then provides a physical model for Arnold's appearance and a historical referent for Arnold's existence. Yet more profoundly, the myth of Dylan's being organized or somehow controlled by his music is reflected by Connie, Arnold, and Ellie being organized or perhaps even unified by the almost mystical music heard throughout the story. Connie, for example, notices the way Arnold "tapped one fist against another in homage to the perpetual music behind him." Since this "perpetual music" is the one thing that Connie can "depend upon," it even becomes her breath of life; she is "bathed in a glow of slow-pulsed joy that seemed to rise mysteriously out of the music itself, . . . breathed in and breathed out with each gentle rise of her chest." Paying "close attention" to the words and singing along with the songs played on the "XYZ Sunday Jamboree," Connie spends her Sunday afternoon worshipping "the music that made everything so good." And when her two visitors arrive, "the same program . . . playing inside the house" is also playing on Ellie Oscar's radio. In fact, "the music from [Connie's] radio and [Ellie's] blend together." Ellie is so closely associated with the radio that without it pressed up against his ear, he grimaces "as if . . . the air was too much for him." Both Ellie's and Arnold's existences seem to depend completely on the "perpetual music"; consequently, Oates appears to be suggesting that they are not literally present. They are instead part of Connie's musically induced fantasy—another of her so-called "trashy daydreams." . . .

The reference to "Mister Tambourine Man" implies another connection between the story and Dylan. A few of his song lyrics are very similar to the story itself. Oates herself suggests that part of the story's inspiration was "hearing for some weeks Dylan's song 'It's All Over Now, Baby Blue.'" Such lines as "you must leave now," "something calls for you," "the vagabond who's rapping at your door," and "go start anew" are suggestive of the impending change awaiting Connie. Two other Dylan songs are equally as applicable though. The following lines from "Like a Rolling Stone"—the second most popular song of 1965 (the story was first published in 1966)—are also very similar to Connie's situation at the end of the story:

You used to be so amused
At Napoleon in rags and the language that he used
Go to him now, he calls you, you can't refuse



Connie is the framer,
the story creator—and the
diabolic traces in her fiction
frighten her not because they
are the manifestations of an
outside evil but because they
are the symbolic
extrapolations of her own
psyche."

When you got nothing, you got nothing to lose
You're invisible now, you got no secrets to conceal.

But Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man"—the number ten song in 1965—is even more similar. The following stanza establishes the notion of using music to rouse one's imagination into a blissful fantasy world:

Take me on a trip upon your magic swirlin' ship,
My senses have been stripped,
My hands can't feel to grip,
My toes too numb to step,
Wait only for my boot heels to be wanderin'
I'm ready to go anywhere, I'm ready for to fade
Into my own parade.
Cast your dancin' spell my way,
I promise to go under it.
Hey, Mister Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
I'm not sleepy and there ain't no place I'm going to
Hey, Mister Tambourine Man, play a song for me
In the jungle, jangle morning I'll come followin' you

Arnold Friend's car—complete with the phrase "MAN THE FLYING SAUCERS"—is just such "a magic swirlin' ship." Arnold is the personification of popular music, particularly Bob Dylan's music; and as such, Connie's interaction with him is a musically induced fantasy, a kind of "magic carpet ride" in "a convertible jalopy painted gold." Rising out of Connie's radio, Arnold Friend/Bob Dylan is a magical, musical messiah; he persuades Connie to abandon her father's house. As a manifestation of her own desires, he frees her from the limitations of a fifteen-year-old girl, assisting her maturation by stripping her of her childlike vision.

Source: Mike Tierce and John Michael Crafton, "Connie's Tambourine Man: A New Reading of Arnold Friend," in

Studies in Short Fiction, Vol. 22, No. 2, Spring, 1985, pp. 219-24.

Larry Rubin

Rubin is a critic, professor of English, and an award-winning poet. In the following essay, he comments on Joyce M. Wegs's characterization of Arnold Friend as the devil in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?," but also suggests that the story is nothing but Connie's dream.

In a recent essay Joyce M. Wegs brilliantly establishes the satanic identity of the sinister Arnold Friend, young Connie's abductor and probable rapist-murderer in Joyce Carol Oates's widely anthologized short story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" On another level, the psychological level, she points out that Arnold is "the incarnation of Connie's unconscious erotic desires and dreams, but in uncontrollable nightmare form." I would go a step further and suggest that, on still another level, the whole terrifying episode involving Arnold Friend is itself a dream—a fantasy that Connie falls into on a sleepy Sunday afternoon when she is left alone in the house and decides to spend the entire day drying her hair. For those of her readers who don't believe in devils, Oates has made the willing suspension of disbelief somewhat easier by imparting to her story a dreamlike, unreal atmosphere that makes it possible for the reader to view Connie's scary encounter with Arnold as a dream-vision or "daymare"—one in which Connie's intense desire for total sexual experience runs headlong into her innate fear of such experience. We must remember that Connie is only fifteen; and the collision is gorgeous.

First of all, for all the talk of sex and boys in the story, we have no clear evidence that Connie is not still a virgin. Sophisticated, yes—but only in the most superficial ways, involving the heightening of her physical charms. Even the brief time Connie spends with a boy named Eddie in an alley seems, in context, more in keeping with smooching or even heavy petting than with triple-x sex. Indeed, her horror at Arnold Friend's direct solicitation ("I'll come inside you where it's all secret and you'll give in to me and you'll love me—") would appear to be owing to her basic lack of full sexual experience. In the repeated references to rock music in the shopping center she frequents and on the radio, both in Arnold's car and her own house, we find a powerful source of erotic suggestion and of Connie's intensi-

fied teen-age hungers, true; but nowhere are we given to feel that she is a fully experienced woman. Rather, we experience her as a somewhat childish and silly narcissistic adolescent, one who feels put down by her more mature older sister (a librarian, and a perfect foil to Connie in her primness) and by her mother, who accuses her of "trashy daydreams." Actually, the trashy daydream involving Arnold may, in a sense, have a certain sobering effect on her frivolousness. Like Dante's dream-vision of Hell, it might improve the situation.

But such speculation begs the question, which is, *Is it all a daydream?* The first clue that we get that it *is* comes even before the Arnold Friend episode, when Oates tells us: "But all the boys fell back and dissolved into a single face that was not even a face but an idea, a feeling, mixed up with the urgent insistent pounding of the music and the humid night air of July." As we shall see, that music provides a key link between her daydreams and their materialization in Arnold Friend. But first we have another important clue, in Connie's languid dreaminess when she is left alone in the house on that fateful, hot summer afternoon: "Connie sat with her eyes closed in the sun, dreaming and dazed with the warmth about her as if this were a kind of love, the caresses of love. . . . She shook her head as if to get awake." Because it is so hot she goes inside and, sitting on the edge of her bed, listens for an hour and a half to rock songs on the radio, "bathed in a glow of slow-pulsed joy that seemed to rise mysteriously out of the music itself and lay languidly about the airless little room, breathed in and out with each gentle rise and fall of her chest." At this point Oates starts a new paragraph to tell us that "After a while she heard a car coming up the drive" This is Arnold driving up, just when the author has described certain physiological sounds and motions that sound suspiciously like those of sleep.

If Arnold is indeed the devil—and he may well be, on the level so perspicaciously analyzed by Joyce Wegs—he is certainly a comical one, with his wig, incompletely made-up face, stuffed boots, and stumbling gait. In the *threat* he represents to Connie, of course, he is indeed a figure of evil, but with all this fakery, what Oates seems to be showing us is the absurd emptiness and falseness of sexual fulfillment. Connie fears she will be destroyed by Arnold, and the critics (like Wegs) have concentrated on the immediate level of *physical* death; what makes the story so rich, it seems to me, is the possibility of seeing her pending destruction as a *moral* phenomenon. Her compulsive sex drive will

destroy her, Oates seems to tell us, but not simply physically (which, if that were all there were to it, would make the story merely a luscious gumdrop for gothic horror fans). It is the potential destruction of Connie as a *person*, on a humanistic level, that is the real source of power in this story, and it is through the protagonist's daydream of fearful sexual fulfillment that this horror is conveyed.

The fact that Connie recognizes the sensual music being broadcast on Arnold's car radio as being the same as that emanating from her own in the house provides another strong clue to his real nature—that of a dream-like projection of her erotic fantasies. His music and hers, Oates tells us, blend perfectly, and indeed Arnold's voice is perceived by Connie as being the same as that of the disc jockey on the radio. Thus the protagonist's inner state of consciousness is being given physical form by her imagination. We should recall that Connie's initial response to her first view of Arnold the night before, in the shopping center, was one of intense sexual excitement; now she discovers how dangerous that excitement can be to her survival as a person. Instinctively she recoils; but the conflict between excitement and desire, on the one hand, and fear, on the other, leaves her will paralyzed, and she cannot even dial the phone for help. Such physical paralysis in the face of oncoming danger is a phenomenon familiar to all dreamers, like being unable to run from the monster because your legs won't respond to your will.

Finally, the rather un-devil-like tribute that Arnold pays Connie as she finally succumbs to his threats against her family and goes out of the house to him—"... you're better than them [her family] because not a one of them would have done this for you"—is exactly what poor, unappreciated Connie wants to hear. She is making a noble sacrifice, and in her dream she gives herself full credit for it.

The episode with Arnold Friend, then, may be viewed as the vehicle for fulfillment of Connie's deep-rooted desire for ultimate sexual gratification, a fearsome business which, for the uninitiated female, may involve destruction of the person. Unsophisticated as she is, Connie's subconscious is aware of this danger, and her dream conveys this conflict. Thus, Oates's achievement in this story lies in her ability to convey all these subtleties while still creating the illusion of a real-life experience.

Source: Larry Rubin, "Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" in *Explicator*, Vol 42, No. 4, Summer, 1984, pp 57-60.

Joyce M. Wegs

In the following essay, Wegs concentrates on the "grotesque" factors in Oates's "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been," citing them as the reason the story fills the reader with fear even though it takes place in familiar surroundings.

Joyce Carol Oates's ability to absorb and then to transmit in her fiction the terror which is often a part of living in America today has been frequently noted and admired. For instance, Walter Sullivan praises her skill by noting that "horror resides in the transformation of what we know best, the intimate and comfortable details of our lives made suddenly threatening." Although he does not identify it as such, Sullivan's comment aptly describes a classic instance of a grotesque intrusion: a familiar world suddenly appears alien. Oates frequently evokes the grotesque in her fiction, drawing upon both its traditional or demonic and its contemporary or psychological manifestations. In the prize-winning short story, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Oates utilizes the grotesque in many of its forms to achieve a highly skillful integration of the multiple levels of the story and, in so doing, to suggest a transcendent reality which reaches beyond surface realism to evoke the simultaneous mystery and reality of the contradiction of the human heart. Full of puzzling and perverse longings, the heart persists in mixing lust and love, life and death, good and evil. Oates's teenage protagonist, Connie, discovers that her dream love-god also wears the face of lust, evil and death.

Centering the narrative on the world of popular teenage music and culture, Oates depicts the tawdry world of drive-in restaurants and shopping plazas blaring with music with a careful eye for authentic surface detail. However, her use of popular music as a thematic referent is typical also of her frequent illumination of the illusions and grotesquely false values which may arise from excessive devotion to such aspects of popular culture as rock music, movies, and romance magazines. In all of her fiction as in this story, she frequently employs a debased religious imagery to suggest the gods which modern society has substituted for conventional religion. Oates delineates the moral poverty of Connie, her fifteen-year-old protagonist, by imaging a typical evening Connie spends at a drive-in restaurant as a grotesquely parodied religious pilgrimage. Left by her friend's father to stroll at the shopping center or go to a movie, Connie and her girlfriend immediately cross the highway to the restaurant frequented by

older teenagers. A grotesque parody of a church, the building is bottle-shaped and has a grinning boy holding a hamburger aloft on top of it. Unconscious of any ludicrousness, Connie and her friend enter it as if going into a "sacred building" which will give them "what haven and blessing they yearned for." It is the music which is "always in the background, like music at a church service" that has invested this "bright-lit, fly-infested" place with such significance. Indeed, throughout the story the music is given an almost mystical character, for it evokes in Connie a mysterious pleasure, a "glow of slow-pulsed joy that seemed to rise mysteriously out of the music itself."

Although the story undoubtedly has a moral dimension, Oates does not take a judgmental attitude toward Connie. In fact, much of the terror of the story comes from the recognition that there must be thousands of Connies. By carefully including telltale phrases, Oates demonstrates in an understated fashion why Connies exist. Connie's parents, who seem quite typical, have disqualified themselves as moral guides for her. At first reading, the reader may believe Connie's mother to be concerned about her daughter's habits, views, and friends; but basically their arguments are little more than a "pretense of exasperation, a sense that they . . . [are] tugging and struggling over something of little value to either of them." Connie herself is uncertain of her mother's motives for constantly picking at her; she alternates between a view that her mother's harping proceeds from jealousy of Connie's good looks now that her own have faded and a feeling that her mother really prefers her over her plain older sister June because she is prettier. In other words, to Connie and her mother, real value lies in beauty. Connie's father plays a small role in her life, but by paralleling repeated phrases, Oates suggests that this is precisely the problem. Because he does not "bother talking much" to his family, he can hardly ask the crucial parental questions, "Where are you going?" or "Where have you been?" The moral indifference of the entire adult society is underscored by Oates' parallel description of the father of Connie's friend, who also "never . . . [bothers] to ask" what they did when he picks up the pair at the end of one of their evenings out. Similarly, on Sunday morning, "none of them bothered with church," not even that supposed paragon, June.

Since her elders do not bother about her, Connie is left defenseless against the temptations represented by Arnold Friend. A repeated key phrase emphasizes her helplessness. As she walks through the

parking lot of the restaurant with Eddie, she can not "help but" look about happily, full of joy in a life characterized by casual pickups and constant music. When she sees Arnold in a nearby car, she looks away, but her instinctive flirtatiousness triumphs and she can not "help but" look back. Later, like Lot's wife leaving Sodom and Gomorrah, she cannot "help but look back" at the plaza and drive-in as her friend's father drives them home. In Connie's case, the consequences of the actions she can not seem to help are less biblically swift to occur and can not be simply labeled divine retribution.

Since music is Connie's religion, its values are hers also. Oates does not include the lyrics to any popular songs here, for any observer of contemporary America could surely discern the obvious link between Connie's high esteem for romantic love and youthful beauty and the lyrics of scores of hit tunes. The superficiality of Connie's values becomes terrifyingly apparent when Arnold Friend, the external embodiment of the teenage ideal celebrated in popular songs, appears at Connie's home in the country one Sunday afternoon when she is home alone, listening to music and drying her hair. It is no accident that Arnold's clothes, car, speech, and taste in music reflect current teenage chic almost exactly, for they constitute part of a careful disguise intended to reflect Arnold's self-image as an accomplished youthful lover.

Suspense mounts in the story as the reader realizes along with Connie that Arnold is not a teenager and is really thirty or more. Each part of his disguise is gradually revealed to be grotesquely distorted in some way. His shaggy black hair, "crazy as a wig," is evidently really a wig. The mask-like appearance of his face has been created by applying a thick coat of makeup; however, he has carelessly omitted his throat. Even his eyelashes appear to be made-up, but with some tarlike material. In his clothing, his disguise appears more successful, for Connie approves of the way he dresses, as "all of them dressed," in tight jeans, boots, and pullover. When he walks, however, Connie realizes that the runty Arnold, conscious that the ideal teenage dream lover is tall, has stuffed his boots; the result is, however, that he can hardly walk and staggers ludicrously. Attempting to bow, he almost falls. Similarly, the gold jalopy covered with teenage slang phrases seems authentic until Connie notices that one of them is no longer in vogue. Even his speech is not his own, for it recalls lines borrowed from disc jockeys, teenage slang, and lines from popular songs. Arnold's strange companion, Ellie

Oscar, is just as grotesque as Arnold. Almost totally absorbed in listening to music and interrupting this activity only to offer threatening assistance to Arnold, Ellie is no youth either; he has the "face of a forty-year-old baby." Although Arnold has worked out his disguise with great care, he soon loses all subtlety in letting Connie know of his evil intentions; he is not simply crazy but a criminal with plans to rape and probably to murder Connie.

However, Arnold is far more than a grotesque portrait of a psychopathic killer masquerading as a teenager; he also has all the traditional sinister traits of that arch-deceiver and source of grotesque terror, the devil. As is usual with Satan, he is in disguise; the distortions in his appearance and behavior suggest not only that his identity is faked but also hint at his real self. Equating Arnold and Satan is not simply a gratuitous connection designed to exploit traditional demonic terror, for the early pages of the story explicitly prepare for this linking by portraying popular music and its values as Connie's perverted version of religion. When Arnold comes up the drive, her first glance makes Connie believe that a teenage boy with his jalopy, the central figure of her religion, has arrived; therefore, she murmurs "Christ, Christ" as she wonders about how her newly-washed hair looks. When the car—a parodied golden chariot?—stops, a horn sounds "as if this were a signal Connie knew." On one level, the horn honks to announce the "second coming" of Arnold, a demonic Day of Judgment. Although Connie never specifically recognizes Arnold as Satan, her first comment to him both hints at his infernal origins and faithfully reproduces teenage idiom: "Who the *hell* do you think you are?" (emphasis mine). When he introduces himself, his name too hints at his identity, for "friend" is uncomfortably close to "fiend"; his initials could well stand for Arch Fiend. The frightened Connie sees Arnold as "only half real": he "had driven up her driveway all right but had come from nowhere before that and belonged nowhere." Especially supernatural is his mysterious knowledge about her, her family, and her friends. At one point, he even seems to be able to see all the way to the barbecue which Connie's family is attending and to get a clear vision of what all the guests are doing. Typical of his ambiguous roles is his hint that he had something to do with the death of the old woman who lived down the road. It is never clear whether Arnold has killed her, has simply heard of her death, or knows about it in his devil role of having come to



Dedicated to
contemporary balladeer Bob
Dylan, this story in a sense
represents Oates' updated
prose version of a ballad in
which a demon lover carries
away his helpless victim."

take her away to hell. Although Arnold has come to take Connie away, in his traditional role as evil spirit, he may not cross a threshold uninvited; he repeatedly mentions that he is not going to come in after Connie, and he never does. Instead, he lures Connie out to him. Part of his success may be attributed to his black magic in having put his sign on her—X for victim. Because the devil is not a mortal being, existing as he does in all ages, it is not surprising that he slips in remembering what slang terms are in vogue. Similarly, his foolish attempt at a bow may result from a mixup in temporal concepts of the ideal lover. In addition, his clumsy bow may be due to the fact that it must be difficult to manipulate boots if one has cloven feet! . . .

Oates encourages the reader to look for multiple levels in this story and to consider Arnold and Connie at more than face value by her repeated emphasis on the question of identity. The opening of the story introduces the concept to which both Connie and her mother seem to subscribe—being pretty means being someone. In fact, her mother's acid questions as she sees Connie at her favorite activity of mirror-gazing—"Who are you? You think you're so pretty?"—also introduce the converse of this idea, namely, that those who lack physical beauty have no identity. As does almost everything in the story, everything about Connie has "two sides to it." However, Connie's nature, one for at home and one for "anywhere that was not home," is simple in comparison to that of Arnold. Connie's puzzled questions at first query what role Arnold thinks he is playing: "Who the hell do you think you are?" Then she realizes that he sees himself all too literally as the man of her dreams, and she becomes more concerned about knowing his real identity. By the time that Arnold asks,

"Don't you know who I am?" Connie realizes that it is no longer a simple question of whether he is a "jerk" or someone worth her attention but of just how crazy he is. By the end she knows him to be a murderer, for she realizes that she will never see her family again. However, only the reader sees Arnold's Satan identity. Connie's gradual realization of Arnold's identity brings with it a recognition of the actual significance of physical beauty: Arnold is indeed someone to be concerned about, even if he is no handsome youth. At the conclusion Connie has lost all identity except that of victim, for Arnold's half-sung sigh about her blue eyes ignores the reality of her brown ones. In Arnold's view, Connie's personal identity is totally unimportant.

Dedicated to contemporary balladeer Bob Dylan, this story in a sense represents Oates' updated prose version of a ballad in which a demon lover carries away his helpless victim. By adding modern psychological insights, she succeeds in revealing the complex nature of the victim of a grotesque intrusion by an alien force; on one level, the victim actually welcomes and invites this demonic visitation. Like Bob Dylan, she grafts onto the ballad tradition a moral commentary which explores but does not solve the problems of the evils of our contemporary society; an analogous Dylan ballad is his "It's a Hard Rain's a Gonna Fall." Even the title records not only the ritual parental questions but also suggests that there is a moral connection between the two questions: where Connie goes is related to where she has been. Oates does not judge Connie in making this link, however; Connie is clearly not in complete control over where she has been. The forces of her society, her family, and her self combine to make her fate inescapable.

Source: Joyce M. Wegs, "'Don't You Know Who I Am?': The Grotesque in Oates's 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?,'" in *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January, 1975, pp. 66-72.

Sources

Gilman, Richard. Review of *The Wheel of Love*, in *New York Times Book Review*, October 25, 1970, p. 4.

Long, Robert Emmet. Review of *Wheel of Love*, in *Saturday Review*, October 24, 1970, p. 36.

Oates, Joyce Carol. "'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?' and *Smooth Talk*: Short Story into Film," in *(Woman) Writer: Occasions and Opportunities*, Dutton, 1988, pp. 316-21.

Quirk, Tom. "A Source for 'Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?'" *Studies in Short Fiction*, Vol. 18, no. 4, Fall, 1981, pp. 413-19.

Review of *Wheel of Love*, in *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 47, no. 1, Winter, 1971, p. xv.

Sullivan, Walter. "The Artificial Demon: Joyce Carol Oates and the Dimensions of the Real," *The Hollins Critic*, Vol. 9, no. 4, December, 1972, pp. 1-12.

Waller, G. F. *Dreaming America: Obsession and Transcendence in the Fiction of Joyce Carol Oates*, Louisiana State University Press, 1979.

Further Reading

Clemons, Walter. "Joyce Carol Oates: Love and Violence," in *Conversations with Joyce Carol Oates*, edited by Lee Milazzo, University Press of Mississippi, 1989, pp. 32-41. Clemons discusses Oates as a chronicler of the way people live in the contemporary world.

Creighton, Joanne V. *Joyce Carol Oates*, Twayne, 1979, 173 p. Creighton analyzes the complete body of Oates's fiction through 1979.

Johnson, Greg. *Understanding Joyce Carol Oates*, University of South Carolina Press, 1987, 224 p. Johnson presents analyses of Oates's fiction.

Moser, Don. "The Pied Piper of Tucson," *Life*, March 4, 1966, pp. 18-24 and 80-90C.

This journalistic treatment of an Arizona mass murderer provides many parallels to Oates's story, and she has since confirmed that her inspiration for "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" came from reading this article and from Moser's presentation of the charismatic killer Charles Schmid.

Myers, George. "Oates Writes Out of 'Fascination,' Not Zeal," in *Conversations with Joyce Carol Oates*, edited by Lee Milazzo, University Press of Mississippi, 1989, pp. 181-85.

Oates talks about her work as a reader, writer, and critic.

Wagner, Linda W. "Joyce Carol Oates: The Changing Shapes of Her Realities," an introduction to *Critical Essays on Joyce Carol Oates*, G.K. Hall & Co., 1979, 180 p.

Overall appraisal of Oates's work and discussion of the author's effect on the American literary scene.

Gale Group's "For Students" Literature Guides



Nonfiction Classics for Students

Provides detailed literary and historical background on the most commonly studied nonfiction essays, books, biographies and memoirs in a streamlined, easy-to-use format. Covering 15-20 works per volume, this reference series gives high school and undergraduate students an ideal starting point for

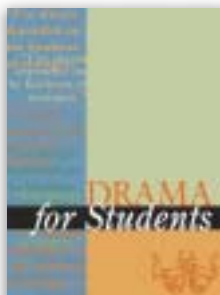
class assignments, term papers and special projects. Entries provide: a brief author biography; a general introduction to and summary of the work; an annotated list of principal characters; general discussions of the organization and construction, historical and cultural context, and principal themes of the work; and original critical essays written by academics in the field, supplemented by excerpted previously published essays and a list of sources for further reading. In addition, entries typically include information on media adaptations; reading recommendations; a list of study questions; and more.



Novels for Students

Contains easily accessible and context-rich discussions of the literary and historical significance of major novels from various cultures and time periods. Entries provide: a brief author biography; a general introduction to and summary of the work; an annotated list of principal characters; general discussions of the organization and construction, historical and cultural context, and principal themes of the work; and original critical essays written by academics in the field, supplemented by excerpted previously published essays and a list of sources for further reading. In addition, entries typically include information on media adaptations; reading recommendations; a list of study questions; and more.

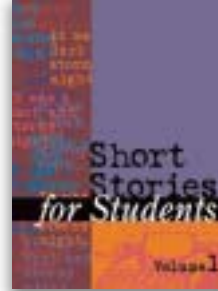
construction, historical and cultural context, and principal themes of the work; and original critical essays written by academics in the field, supplemented by excerpted previously published essays and a list of sources for further reading. In addition, entries typically include information on media adaptations; reading recommendations; a list of study questions; and more.



Drama for Students

Features detailed coverage of the plays most frequently studied in literature classes. Entries provide: a brief author biography; a general introduction to and summary of the work; an annotated list of principal characters; general discussions of the organization and construction, historical and cultural context, and principal themes of the

work; original critical essays written by academics in the field, supplemented by excerpted previously published essays; a list of sources for further reading; and more.



Short Stories for Students

Each volume presents detailed information on approximately 20 of the most-studied short stories at the high school and early-college levels. Entries provide: a brief author biography; a general introduction to and summary of the work; an annotated list of principal characters; general discussions of

the organization and construction, historical and cultural context, and principal themes of the work; and original critical essays written by academics in the field, supplemented by excerpted previously published essays. In addition, entries typically include information on media adaptations; reading recommendations; a list of study questions; and more.



Epics for Students

This reference is designed to provide students and other researchers with a guide to understanding and enjoying the epic literature that is most studied in classrooms. Each entry includes an introductory essay; biographical information on the author; a plot summary; an examination of the epic's principal themes, style, construction,

historical background and critical reception; and an original critical essay supplemented by excerpted previously published criticism. In addition, entries typically include information on media adaptations; reading recommendations; a list of study questions; and more.



Shakespeare for Students

These accessible volumes provide essential interpretation and criticism of the Shakespeare plays most often studied in secondary schools and undergraduate curricula. Each play is treated in approximately 50 to 75 pages of text. Entries feature an introduction to the play, including a plot

summary, descriptive list of characters and outline of the general critical issues related to studying the play; annotated criticism reprinted from periodicals and academic journals and arranged by general topic/theme; and lists of sources for further study.